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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NICOSIA 000217

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, IO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNFICYP](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: CYPRUS: UNFICYP DOWNBEAT ON CBM PROGRESS, TURKISH
RESTRICTIONS

REF: A. NICOSIA 193
[1](#)B. NICOSIA 211

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: UN Special Adviser Alexander Downer desires continued U.S. pressure on Turkey for flexibility on Cyprus and is pursuing a call on the National Security Adviser to make this point. UNFICYP chief Taye-Brook Zerihoun told the Ambassador on March 25 that Downer acknowledges Turkey's backing of the UN settlement effort, but believes it should be more vociferous in support of Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat's efforts. More direct, visible USG intervention in the Cyprus settlement talks likely would harm the negotiating climate, Zerihoun thought, due to continuing G/C fears of Anglo-American interference. On the Limnitis Buffer Zone (BZ) crossing, a key confidence-building measure, the UN diplomat confirmed the G/C side was balking at the latest UN compromise; worse, Christofias had tabled the plan for discussion by the Republic of Cyprus's National Council, a notoriously sieve-like and nationalistic institution. Zerihoun did not limit his criticisms to the Greek Cypriot side. UNFICYP personnel were facing continued restrictions on movement and activity north of the BZ, and he was protesting loudly both locally and in New York. END SUMMARY.

Downer: Turkey Still Key

[1](#)2. (C) Zerihoun had sought the meeting with the Ambassador to follow up a same-day telcon in which he mentioned UNSA Downer's interest in calling National Security Adviser General James Jones. He could provide few specifics regarding the points Downer sought to raise, but surmised the gist would entail seeking continued U.S. encouragement of Turkey to engage productively and flexibly on Cyprus. Downer understood that Turkish officialdom backed the UN Good Offices mission and the settlement effort, Zerihoun continued, "but it could always do better." Leaders such as PM Tayyip Erdogan quite reasonably were focused on March municipal elections, with Cyprus on the back burner. But Erdogan and/or President Abdullah Gul ought to show more support for the process by publicly commending the leaders' efforts, Zerihoun reckoned. The U.S. might also play a useful go-between role, reminding the Turkish leadership that Europe would appreciate Ankara's intention to become "part of the solution" on the island.

[1](#)3. (C) Cyprus undoubtedly would receive mention during the President's April 6-7 visit to Turkey, the Ambassador assured. And the U.S. had committed to supporting Downer's Good Offices mission wherever and however possible. He wondered whether the Turks would find the approach informative absent a specific action request, however. Was

there anything concrete that Downer wanted the Turks to do? Further, Ankara did not appear to be hindering CyProb progress at this stage, the Ambassador added.

14. (C) Picking up on Zerioun's earlier points, the Ambassador said that the starting point of most U.S. discussions with Ankara was identifying ways to help get Turkey into the European Union. This included finding a solution to the Cyprus Problem. Trying to anticipate a potential Turkish response to such a vague request from POTUS, the Ambassador speculated that Turkey might respond with a long-held but anathema-to-Downer suggestion: that the U.S. name a Special Cyprus Coordinator to assist in the peace process. Zerioun fretted that such a move could derail the talks at this point, owing to continuing G/C fears of an Anglo-American conspiracy to impose a Cyprus solution. Envoys would come later, he thought, based on his experiences in other peacekeeping missions (Darfur was his last). But it made no sense for them to deploy before the real give-and-take commences later in the year. Zerioun committed to trying to obtain a better read on what Downer wanted POTUS to raise with the Turks.

No Light in Limnitis Tunnel

15. (C) The Ambassador raised UN efforts to broker a compromise to allow the Limnitis BZ crossing in NW Cyprus to open (Ref A), providing readouts of his recent conversations with the sides' chief representatives and our recent efforts in Ankara. In a March 24 dinner, G/C lead negotiator George

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Iacovou stated flatly that the Greek Cypriots would not accept the UN's latest compromise. His T/C counterpart, Ozdil Nami, had seemed more flexible (Ref B), telling him on March 19 that he awaited a concrete proposal from Iacovou that stipulated G/C conditions. Last, the Ambassador shared that Embassy Ankara colleagues had pitched the UN arrangement on Limnitis with GoT interlocutors and had received encouraging responses but no guarantees.

16. (C) Zerioun confirmed the current Limnitis impasse and speculated that Iacovou's new, hard-line stance likely reflected President Christofias's political calculus that the negatives of accepting Turkish/T/C preconditions outweighed the electoral benefits of opening the crossing. Zerioun had heard from AKEL party leader Andros Kyprianou that Christofias recently tabled the UN compromise for discussion by the National Council, an RoC consultative body comprised of representatives from all G/C political parties that tackled Cyprus Problem matters exclusively. Hard-line positions usually prevailed on the Council and it leaked like a sieve, he and the Ambassador agreed; Christofias might have put Limnitis on the agenda hoping others might kill it, thereby absolving himself of political blame.

17. (C) UN personnel continued to work for a deal, lately engaging the "mukhtars" (village bosses) on either side of the crossing route in hopes they would lobby their respective "capitals." Zerioun questioned whether time better spent on core negotiations was being wasted on confidence-building measures, but concurrently worried that lack of movement on CBMs was symptomatic of a greater problem: the sides' lack of confidence in the process and each other. CBMs currently were not prioritized but rather "bundled," Zerioun explained, with the UN directing effort to any where progress looked possible (Limnitis was formerly in that camp.) He now thought the prospective crossing point needed to be "de-linked" from the other CBMs. The G/C rejection of the Limnitis compromise also threatened progress on shoring up dangerous buildings along the Ledra Street BZ crossing, another point of contention between the sides. (Note: The UN compromise on Limnitis entails Greek Cypriots linking the T/C military enclave of Kokkina to the G/C electrical grid,

obviating the need for UN escorted fuel convoys from the north -- once a T/C precondition for Limnitis's opening.)

Turkish Noose Tightening Around UNFICYP

¶8. (C) Zerioun turned next to a complaint his lieutenants have often raised: increasing Turkish restrictions over UNFICYP's activities and movements in the north. Greek Cypriot UN personnel -- UNFICYP treats them no differently from other nationalities on staff -- have faced especially strict controls, even being removed from Kyrenia while on liberty. Turkish Forces behavior was erratic, Zerioun claimed, and TF leaders had assured they had enacted no new regulations, but were only enforcing existing ones. The situation was becoming untenable for UNFICYP operations, however, and was resulting in further T/C "isolation," as personnel now had limited opportunities to engage Turkish Cypriots.

¶9. (C) UNFICYP Force Commander Mario Sanchez-Debernardi intended to engage local TF commander LTG Hilmi Zorlu soonest to protest, while PKO leadership at UN Headquarters in New York planned to summon the Turkish permanent representative. Zerioun was not seeking U.S. intervention yet, but might at some future point if he cannot break the impasse with the Turkish Forces. Continued problems in the north will have to be raised in UNFICYP's June report to the Security Council, he added.

Comment

¶10. (C) The UN and Downer were correct in deciding recently to devote additional energies to CBMs in order to generate positive negotiating momentum. Regrettably, progress is proving every bit as hard (or harder) to tally here as in the core CyProb issues such as property and governance. Just deciphering who did what when, and why, on Limnitis is proving a full-time job (tellingly, at a March 26 lunch French Ambassador Nicolas Galey reported that Iacovou six days earlier had stated the G/Cs supported the current UN compromise). Regarding Downer's interest in engaging General

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Jones, the Ambassador is attempting to contact Downer (currently in Australia) for specifics and will report contents of that conversation separately.
Urbancic